



Commonwealth of Virginia

Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services

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Virginia Medicaid Agency Announces 500,000 Expansion Enrollment Milestone

*~ Virginia was the only state in the nation to see a decline
in its uninsured rate between 2018 and 2019 ~*

Richmond – The Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) today announced that more than 500,000 Virginians are enrolled in health coverage thanks to expanded Medicaid eligibility rules that took effect in January 2019.

The agency marked the milestone with the release of a new infographic developed by a multi-disciplinary team of researchers from Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Medicine.

The infographic offers a preliminary view of the outcomes of Medicaid expansion related to health insurance coverage, access to care, utilization of primary care, and racial disparities using data analyzed by the Department of Health Behavior and Policy, and the Department of Family Medicine and Population Health.

Medicaid expansion continues to be a critical support for Virginians throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency, with an additional 116,100 adults enrolling through the new eligibility rules since the declaration of the state of emergency in March 2020.

“Medicaid expansion is a powerful tool in our work to increase access to high-quality health coverage, and it has been an essential part of our Commonwealth’s response to the COVID-19

health emergency,” said Karen Kimsey, DMAS Director. “Our partners at VCU have provided us with an impressive look at the accomplishments we’ve experienced as well as a roadmap for further addressing racial health disparities in 2021.”

"VCU’s analysis of Medicaid expansion makes clear how important health care coverage is to attaining and maintaining health and well-being," said Daniel Carey, MD, MHCM, Virginia Secretary of Health and Human Resources. "With Medicaid expansion, Virginians are better able to get their health and medical needs addressed, which is critically important during the COVID-19 health emergency."

Virginia was the only state in the nation to experience a reduction in the uninsured rate between 2018 and 2019, the first year of the expanded eligibility rules. The overall uninsured rate declined from 12.3% to 11%. The reduction was more dramatic for adults ages 18-64 with incomes below 138% of the poverty line. That population segment saw its uninsured rate drop from 28.1% to 23%.

“Medicaid expansion has made a huge difference to the people who became eligible to enroll,” said Peter Cunningham, Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Health Behavior and Policy who is leading the evaluation. “Not only has it vastly improved their access to health care, but it has increased their financial well-being and their ability to work. And this is despite the negative impact they may be experiencing from the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Key findings of the VCU analysis include:

- Virginians who enrolled in Medicaid coverage reported a dramatic decrease in unmet medical and other health needs, including a 38 percentage point decline in unmet need for primary care and a 32 percentage point decline in unmet need for prescription medicines.
- A reduction from 47% to 33% in individuals using emergency rooms for basic health care after they enrolled in Medicaid.
- A 59% decline in the number of individuals paying off medical debt after they enrolled in Medicaid.
- Hospitals experienced a 56% decline in uninsured patients between 2018 and 2019, along with a 47% increase in patients with Medicaid coverage.
- The period of time women have retained their Medicaid coverage following the birth of a child increased from four months in 2017 to 12 months in 2019.
- An examination of racial equity as measured by unmet health needs found improvements following Medicaid expansion, but disparities continue to exist.